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Contra Aid Controversy

TOM BROKAW: In this country, Secretary of State George Shultz lobbied hard today for \$100 million in U. S. aid to the contras. Those are the rebels fighting Nicaragua's government; Shultz saying that the problem with freeing that money is the U. S. House of Representatives. Shultz said there has been one delay after another, and he charged these delays are helping the Sandinistas.

A House vote on the contra aid proposal is scheduled for the week of June 22nd.

U. S. military aid to the contras now is frozen. But since last year, unofficially and illegally, as NBC's Art Kent is able to report now, U. S. weapons have been flowing to those rebels.

ART KENT: Jesus Garcia used to be a corrections officer in Dade County, Florida. Now he is in jail, convicted of having an illegal machine gun and silencer. Garcia claims he was set up because he knew too much about secret operations to support the Nicaraguan rebels, operations that violated the congressional ban on direct or indirect aid to the rebels.

One example.

JESUS GARCIA: I helped them load the arms shipment on vans. There were a lot of arms.

KENT: According to Garcia and others, the arms were shipped from this airport in March, 1985. Destination: Central America. They say the cargo of weapons and munitions had been gathered in Miami by Tom Posey, the head of a right-wing group that provides mercenaries and military supplies for the contras.

Steven Carr and Peter

Glibbery are two of the mercenaries who were recruited.

STEVEN CARR: ...loaded with arms and munitions and flew them down from Fort Lauderdale by an Air Florida transporter to the San Salvador military air force base.

KENT: In El Salvador, the arms were transferred to smaller planes and sent on to Costa Rica. Glibbery says he saw the arms arrive.

PETER GLIBBERY: Mr. Hull and a man by the name of Rob Ahren and myself witnessed this aircraft landing in northern Costa Rica.

KENT: Mr. Hull is this man, John Hull. Congressional sources say Hull claimed to be a liaison between the Central Intelligence Agency and the contras at a time when Congress had forbidden any direct or indirect aid to the rebels.

JOHN HULL: I have no contact with the CIA. I don't receive pay from the CIA.

KENT: But congressional sources and others say Hull was a CIA link in the effort to secretly supply the contra rebels, an effort planned and directed from Washington by this man, Lt. Colonel Oliver North, Deputy Director for Political/Military Affairs of President Reagan's National Security Council. Sources say under North's plan, CIA assistance to the contra rebels, banned by Congress, was replaced by a network of private military and financial aid. The same sources say retired Army Major General John Singlaub and Robert Owen, a former congressional aide, acted as North's go-betweens to the rebels. The U. S. Embassy in Costa Rica, congressional

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staffers investigating all of this also want to question Owen, Hull and Posey about what they might know about an alleged plot to blow it up. According to Garcia, the idea was to kill Ambassador Lewis Thames and blame it on the Sandinistas to arouse the anger of the American people.

GARCIA: When they approached me about it, I really didn't want to do it, not killing Americans.

KENT: Garcia and others say the plan was dropped when details began to leak out.

Posey, Singlaub, Owen and North were all unavailable for comment on any of this. Senator John Kerry, an opponent of Reagan administration policies in Central America, will soon give the Senate Foreign Relations Committee information from several dozen sources which Kerry says raises serious questions about White House efforts to ignore the ban on aid to the contras.

Art Kent, NBC News, Washington.